

**JOINT MEETING OF MAINE EMS EDUCATION & EXAM COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Date: Wednesday, July 13, 2005  
Education Members: D. Batsie, B. Chamberlin, R. Chase, D. Cornelio, L. Delano, S. Diaz, P. Marcolini (Chairperson-Education Committee), D. Palladino, R. Petrie, S. Stewart-Doré, B. Zito  
Absent: M. Barter, D. Boucher, B. Davis, S. Latulippe, D. Robishaw, D. Russell, J. Wellman  
Exam Members: J. LeBrun, K. Roderick, G. Utgard, J. Vaniotis (Chairperson-Exam Committee)  
Absent: T. Coleman, R. Doughty, R. Hawkes, T. Norsworthy, T. Weed  
Staff: D. Corning, D. White, J. Bradshaw  
Guests: D. Carroll, S. Leach, C. Pillsbury  
Timekeeper:  
Scribe: D. Corning  
Meeting Opened at: 0945

**SPEAKER      DISCUSSION**

Introductions were made around the room.

Paul opened this special joint meeting of the Education & Exam Committees and Dwight read the following motion from the Board that led to this meeting. "Motion: To have the staff representatives to the Education & Exam Committees convene the committees for the purpose of developing a model that will incorporate the practical assessments within the core curriculum of the class, and report back to the Board no later than the September Board meeting." Jay reviewed the background of what has brought us to this point. Maine EMS will have an approximate reduction of \$163,000.00 in the fiscal year that has just begun. Each region will be getting approximately a \$15,000.00 reduction in the contract amount from the state. For the regions, testing brings both direct and indirect expenses that are not fully reimbursed. The time has come to look at options other than our traditional 6 station practical test following successful course completion. Steve Leach described the Board's perspective that they were not trying to do away with testing, but to find a way to incorporate competency based testing into the licensure courses. Drexell reviewed our current Maine EMS Law and Rules, which requires us to test, and has been a very structured process for many years. Without a law change, we need to maintain standards and regulations and not allow the process to become too open. Paul opened the floor to comments and discussion.

R. Petrie	The proposed document won't accomplish what we need to do, but will increase regional office work and will significantly increase the I/C workload. We can't establish different pay rates from what the Community College system already pays. This draft has moved away from the original thought that most I/C's already administer something similar to the state final exam. The proposed level of detail in this draft is more than we can add.
L. Delano	I estimate that this proposal will add 10-15 hours to an EMT course, increase the instructor fees, and increase the course tuition fees.
B. Zito	The proposed definition of Course Sponsor may not be accurate.

- R. Petrie      What can we do legally? How confined are we by the current law? Can we accept the final class practical exam as meeting the state testing requirements? If we take the current 6 station skills sheets and tell I/C's that they have to sign off on competency, will that meet the requirements?
- J. LeBrun      If you set aside the Community College issues, this is what all I/C's should already be doing. To some degree, this is not more than what we really expect of people, and it allows the I/C to be more flexible. It does call for more work on behalf of the I/C, but I don't see the need for a lot more money. The current state final exam tests for the competency of a select few, although very important skills.
- L. Delano      There are two levels we are talking about; the regular practical activities and the practical evaluation activities.
- B. Chamberlin      When you are doing a class, your practical assistants are evaluating the students on an on-going basis, now you want us to duplicate that and add hours.
- S. Stewart-Doré      As a whole, I don't have a problem with this. The two concerns I do have are: 1) who qualifies as a state evaluator and 2) why are left over funds being returned to the state?
- D. White      The state evaluators will be Maine EMS staff or contractors, and the left over funds are returned to the state to help make sure the evaluation funds are used to hire evaluators.
- R. Chase      The vast majority of the things in this proposal are already being done in the classes. There are a number of ways this can be incorporated into a class. It may not require more hours in a class, just more organization.
- D. Carroll      This proposal seems like a ton more work for any course sponsor; collecting and distributing extra fees, sending money to the state, etc.
- D. White      The proposal suggests that when a person applies for a course they pay a tuition fee that includes the practical exam fee. After a course add/drop period the course sponsor would forward the \$300 or \$400 fee to the state. The course sponsor would pay the evaluators and would "settle up" with the state at the end of the course for any evaluator money that was not spent on hiring evaluators.
- K. Roderick      What about patients? There is no money included to pay for people to act as patients.
- D. White      Since the ratio would be 1 evaluator to 6 students, it is expected that the students would also act as the patients.
- J. LeBrun      There isn't any money in this proposal that has been set aside for equipment replacement costs. I also think it is important to be able to pay for practical patients, especially "programmed patients".
- L. Delano      Was there a strong feeling about the practical test as it currently exists? Is there a reason we can't just make it the course final?
- J. Bradshaw      I'm not sure that there are many of us who would say that the six-station test adequately evaluates our students. We have an opportunity here to improve what we do as we change it.

- L. Delano This change would lead to an increase in tuition for our students.
- J. Bradshaw For those who would have taken the state test in the past, it is simply a shifting of funds, for those who would not have tested in the past it is an increase in cost.
- R. Petrie Nurses and physicians license without taking a practical test. My concern is that the forms are fine, but we will need a lot more money for equipment. For example, our current paramedic class doesn't stabilize a car on its roof. I suggest we use the drafted check sheets to help I/C's during the course, but use the final skill sheets as they are today for a final evaluation.
- D. Batsie There is a large debate nationally about competency-based exams, and it sounds like this proposal is calling for competency based skill mastery.
- J. LeBrun Perhaps there is a middle ground. Can we take the current skill sheets, put them into the program and allow I/C's the flexibility to use them throughout the class as they see fit?
- D. Batsie Our practical exam currently defines what skills you have to master; I would hate to lose that in a sea of other skills that have to be reviewed.
- P. Marcolini In summation of what has been discussed so far, I hear 5 major areas of discussion:
1. Funding and tuition.
  2. When during the course do we perform evaluations?
  3. Psychomotor objectives – what is mastery, “street ready”, competency, etc.
  4. State oversight
  5. Equipment and costs
- Following a break, P. Marcolini asked J. LeBrun to update the group on any previous discussions by the Operations Team in this area.
- J. LeBrun The I/C is contracted to do a course. At the start of a class checks are made out to Maine EMS for evaluator fees and Maine EMS would pay out these fees as needed. The Operations Team discussed a lack of quality or oversight of our courses. I feel our I/C's do a good job and the state practical exam is a redundancy. It would be helpful to have state evaluators to evaluate the class and review documentation of how students are progressing towards competency, etc.
- D. Carroll If we are going to collect fees and send them to Maine EMS, then let the state evaluator monitor a final course practical exam.
- B. Zito Is it possible for a non-regional entity to do state practical exams?
- D. White Yes, but it would probably be at a much higher cost.
- D. Carroll Then that's what it costs.
- J. LeBrun If the issue is the cost of the exam, then the price of the exam could be increased to cover the cost. Is this an opportunity for us to improve the system for the delivery of education in our state?
- L. Delano The implementation deadline is very fast approaching.

- J. Bradshaw I think it is doable, we just don't know what it will look like yet.
- L. Delano I read the draft document as being critical of our current system.
- D. Palladino This is the right way to go, we need to look at a greater way to evaluate skills demonstrations. Logistically, courses are starting in September and I/C's will not be ready. Can we make a small increase in licensing exam costs to help subsidize the regions until we can do this right?
- D. Carroll The reality is, there will not be any exams (in the traditional sense) until December for classes that are about to begin in August or September.
- P. Marcolini In review of where the discussion have taken us at this point, I now see 3 major points:
1. Continue the exam process as is with an increase in funding.
  2. Change the process, with ongoing evaluations throughout the course.
  3. Change the process, with an end of course practical exam.
- R. Petrie If we raise the cost of the exam we will have more problems, including legislators, complaints of unfunded mandates, etc. Donnie has done an extensive analysis of what tests really cost, and \$150.00 may be accurate. An implementation of the new process by September 1 isn't possible. I suggest we make the current state practical test part of the course and have the state send in an evaluator for oversight of the testing process. Over the long run the Education Committee needs to review the proposed skill sheets for possible future use.
- D. Batsie Maybe we need to look at this over 3 phases:
1. Utilize what we have now.
  2. Review the proposed objectives, train evaluators, etc.
  3. Implement the proposed draft.
- G. Utgard I see the merits of continuing the evaluation process as it currently is. To implement the new concept may be more expensive and time consuming and may lead to a need for a salary increase for I/C's.
- J. LeBrun There should be a Q.I. process. As the evaluation piece comes along, evaluators may learn some "best practices" that are already out there and can be shared with others. A year from now we may have a better idea if the proposal has merit, or if we should go back to licensure exams, no matter what the cost.
- P. Marcolini In summary at this point, the discussion seems to be on continuing with assessment sheets as they are, and having evaluators throughout the course (not just on practical nights) to help improve the courses overall.
- Group The group agreed to the concept of using the current practical skills sheets and making the I/C responsible to document successful completion of these skills by the students.
- B. Chamberlin Aren't regions already evaluating programs? If so, why can't the money go to the regions to evaluate courses 3 or 4 times?
- P. Marcolini Let's make sure we are not stepping back into the regions saying they will do something for a dollar value that doesn't cover all of the costs. We also need to set standards for evaluators to follow, such as standard forms, what they will evaluate, how feedback will be provided, etc.

- J. Vaniotis      We used to have state approved “testers”. What happened to those, and are we trying to recreate them?
- D. Corning      The proposed state evaluator would go into a class 3 or 4 times, distribute and collect surveys for the students, practical evaluators, and the course I/C. The evaluator would consolidate the data for feedback to the I/C at the end of the night. The evaluator would also observe the class and provide feedback on observed strengths and weaknesses. A written report would be prepared for the I/C and Course Sponsor. There seems to be some confusion in our discussion, and a wandering between the proposed state evaluator and the psychomotor skills evaluators.
- R. Petrie      It is really the same as test administrators and practical assistants. Our discussion is really at the state evaluator or test administrator level.
- L. Delano      Operationally, our fall courses are already planned and advertised with tuitions announced. We can’t suddenly increase the tuition price to cover these other expenses.
- D. White      All concepts are on the table. Just as the regions have indirect costs to collect fees and administer the spending of those fees, so does Maine EMS.
- D. Carroll      We already have a list of people that regularly test for us and whom we could recommend as state evaluators. The state collects the money and we submit evaluator names to the state.
- J. Vaniotis      Do you envision evaluating the process (D. White – Yes) or the students (D. White – No). The class would still have class assistants; the state evaluator is looking at the whole program.
- D. Carroll      This proposal, for a 20 student EMT class shows \$1200 income and \$300 for the state evaluator, leaving \$900 for other expenses.
- B. Zito      Does this discussion meet the statutory requirements for state testing?
- D. White      The process needs to be standardized, everyone and every class needs to be doing the same thing.
- P. Marcolini      Where do we sit with antitrust issues when we have six regions talking about the cost of courses?
- D. Carroll      We just need to tweak the course approval document to include how the I/C will do the evaluation process.
- L. Delano      The state evaluator would be sent in, preferably on a practical night, to review how the evaluation process is going, make sure standards are being met, and people are being consistent.
- R. Petrie      Pay versus volunteer to assure quality is a slippery slope. Even though we are already paying people we are still scrambling for help. I/C’s need to step up to the plate and hold up their product for scrutiny.
- J. LeBrun      For the overall evaluator, the emphasis is on the practical, not a broad based evaluation of the course.

- D. White That is something we need to work out. The state evaluator could go in on any night and evaluate the course in total, not just the practical portions. This makes it easier for an I/C to do a traditional mid-term and final evaluation process or a more integrated ongoing evaluation process.
- J. Vaniotis If an I/C is really good, do we need an evaluator coming into their class 3 or 4 times, or would once be sufficient.
- R. Chase I like the broad based evaluation approach. I like to integrate practicals throughout the course and don't want to have to set specific nights to do practical.
- L. Delano Why did the state make the proposed change to course evaluations not just practical evaluations?
- J. LeBrun From my perspective, we don't have enough money for quality class evaluations to be taking place, but it would be nice to be able to do this.
- D. Batsie We need to define the role of the evaluator. Maybe an evaluation only needs to take place once, not three times.
- R. Chase Would there be training on the expectations of evaluators? There needs to be standardization.
- R. Petrie We should change our implementation date to any course starting after August 1<sup>st</sup> would follow the new system. Courses that started before August 1<sup>st</sup> would be tested in our current way. The drafted proposal for retests of students in the current system is OK.
- R. Chase Will it be the responsibility of regions to make sure I/C's are aware of the changes?
- R. Petrie The regions responsibility is to make sure that the sponsors know of the changes.
- D. White Cost structures – Each course will determine their own cost for practical assistants and cover it out of the tuition fees? Each student will pay the state the fee for the state evaluator?
- S. Stewart-Doré If we move away from the model we need to look at a lower fee.
- R. Petrie No, some of that money would go back to the region as a practical test fee.
- D. White Logistically, the state will have \$300 for the state evaluator. If you are putting on a course, don't you already have built in equipment replacement costs?
- D. Palladino If students are paying \$60.00 for evaluation of their practical skills, as an I/C I should be able to apply for some of that money to bring in evaluators.
- K. Roderick What is the state doing with the \$60.00 if they are only funding the state evaluator?
- D. White The inability to change because an outside influence won't let us (such as the Community Colleges won't let us set different instructor fees") is like the tail wagging the dog.
- L. Delano There is not only the state evaluator costs, but also the written test proctor, etc.

- J. LeBrun      The concept of leaving the fees where they are has merit as we evaluate this area over the next year.
- J. Vaniotis      What is the liability for I/C's? They will now have to say that a student is competent in their practical skills, not the state.
- D. Corning      (With the help of others) Recap of what there is agreement on:
1. The current state test practical sheets need to be moved into the classroom and become the I/C responsibility.
  2. State evaluators will evaluate the course, with emphasis on the practical components.
  3. Fees need further discussion, but should probably stay the same.
  4. Practical evaluators (or assistant instructors) are the responsibility of the course.
  5. The state will develop criteria for what it is the state evaluator is evaluating.
  6. This is a short-term measure that will be reviewed and modified over time.
- Action Plan
1. Someone needs to bring I/C's into the loop.
  2. Final product needs to be ready for the Board no later than their September meeting.
  3. Need definition as to who qualifies as a state evaluator and who assigns where they go.
  4. Dwight and Drexell will draft an agenda for the next meeting based on these minutes, and will send it out for any proposed changes from other participants.
  5. Dwight and Drexell to produce the following documents and send out for review and comment:
    - a. State evaluator selection, job, etc.
    - b. Fees and where they go.
    - c. Education process to bring I/C's up to speed.
- J. LeBrun      Rework today's ideas into the existing document.
- B. Zito      When will we know if this is a plausible model?
- D. White      We should know in a couple of days.

**Meeting adjourned at 12:45**

**Next Meeting: July 27, 2005 0930-1230**